

Arkansas Insurance Department

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Governor



Julie Benafield Bowman
Commissioner

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conway Woman Sentenced to Prison for Insurance Fraud

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS (June 27, 2007) —State Insurance Commissioner Julie Benafield Bowman today announced the conviction of Elesha Martin, 35, to three counts of arson and one count of insurance fraud. On June 22, 2007, Pulaski County Circuit Judge Marion Humphrey sentenced Martin to 20 years in the Arkansas Department of Corrections with seven of those years suspended, provided she makes restitution of \$514,928.

As part of an elaborate scheme, Martin would take out renters insurance on a house and eventually set fire to the property in order to file a claim with her insurance company. Defrauded in the scheme were Farmers Insurance which paid a claim on a house in Maumelle for \$130,802 and Encompass Insurance which paid a claim totaling \$219,783 on another Maumelle property. Also swindled was Nationwide Insurance which paid \$164,342 for a property which burned in Cammack Village. The arsons took place in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

“I am extremely proud of my Criminal Investigation Division staff for bringing Ms. Martin to justice,” said Commissioner Bowman. “They and the Maumelle Police and Fire Departments deserve high praise for their investigative work.”

One of the key leads in the case was Martin’s listing of a \$10,000 wedding dress on the content loss inventory she supplied for one of the houses in Maumelle and also the house in Cammack Village.

(MORE)

NEWS RELEASE: Conway Woman Sentenced to Prison

June 27, 2007

Page 2

Commissioner Bowman went on to say, “Insurance fraud hurts every Arkansan by increasing the cost of coverage for everyone.” Suspicions of insurance fraud should be reported to the Arkansas Insurance Department’s Criminal Investigation Division at 866-660-0888.

